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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, February 16, 1942

SUBJECT: "COMMUNITY SCHOOL LUNCHES." Information from surplus marketing officials of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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We in the United States consider good meals for all our boys and girls a mighty important part of the big job of making our Nation strong.

We're looking to our own table, and seeing, as well as we can, that our own family sits down to meals that contain lots of the foods we need for health and strength.

At the same time, we're learning how to work together to feed the other family' children--the children who may, perhaps, need good food even more than our own. In wartime, when this sort of working together is so tremendously important in every field --- for the welfare of us all, the fact that many people are willing to devote time and energy for other family's youngsters is doubly good news.

How much time and energy are we devoting? Well, one good answer to that question is the number of children who are eating meals prepared in schools, settlement houses, nurseries, playgrounds -- everywhere that children gather in groups. The Surplus Marketing Administration of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which buys food for use in these lunches, reports that nearly 6 million boys and girls are now eating meals made in whole or in part from Government food.

Six million children--that's an awfully large number to think about. It really doesn't mean much until you realize where those children are and who they are. They live in every State of the Union and in some of the offshore places

like Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. They attend little mountain schools, and schools out in the desert, and schools in the noisy, crowded city blocks, and schools in quiet suburbs. Some of them come from homes where the parents go to work in busy wartime factories and don't have time to prepare breakfast.

Someone had to plan, prepare and serve the meals for those six million kids--in fact, lots of someones. And many communities have more spirit, a greater sense of cooperation, because they have ~~done~~ that job and done it well. In wartime, it counts for something for a community to feel that way.

When you think of the individual child in our child-feeding programs, the importance of these programs begins to hit home. Because it is the individual child we see--the child whose needs we know are real--the child in the next block.

Farm leaders and the Department of Agriculture officials had this hungry child and other hungry people in mind when they planned this year's farm production program. They were thinking about children in England, where the bombs are falling, and about hungry children in our own country, when they asked farmers to raise more milk, more eggs, more vegetables, and more of many other foods than ever before in history.

Many farmers will grow more food on their own land to furnish the right kind of meals for their own and others' children. Some of the extra food in 1942 will be used by sponsors of urban and suburban lunch programs, and some of it will be distributed by the Surplus Marketing Administration to welfare agencies. They, in turn, will distribute it to schools and other places that need it.

There's one thing about the cooperative feeding of children--it never stops. There is always a new school year, new mouths to be fed, new problems to be met.

Last spring, about 9,000 communities all over the United States planted gardens to raise part of the food for this winter's lunches, or to supplement the food they received from the Government. It was a good shot in the arm for

community life, and often good fun for the youngsters themselves. Children learn .
some things from digging with a hoe and a rake, that they can't get from books.

This spring brings an even greater challenge to communities needing more food
for lunches, who will take the trouble to plan carefully, and care for a community
school-lunch garden. This doesn't mean that all communities can find the space
for an adequate garden, or that any community should dig up lawns and flowerbeds
to raise vegetables for their youngsters. There won't be such serious shortages
of food as all that. Besides, some seeds may be hard to get, and every seed
planted this spring should be made to count. But, if a community has fertile soil,
good gardening facilities and labor, and if the planners are willing to take the
advice of gardening experts, they can get the live fresh vegetables children need.
Certainly a community which can plan wisely and plant carefully for its school
lunch use will reap its reward in healthier youngsters.

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